FINAL SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS TITLED

BRIDGING SKILL GAP BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA- A STUDY ON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS WITH REFERENCE TO KARNATAKA STATE

THESIS SUBMITTED TO MANGALORE UNIVERSITY FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN COMMERCE

Ms. SABINA JOAN DSOUZA

Research Scholar

Dr. CATHERINE NIRMALA J.

Research Guide

Postgraduate Department of Commerce

St. Agnes College (Autonomous), Mangaluru-575002

recognised institution for Ph.D Programme under Mangalore University, Karnataka, India

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly evolving job market, the growing disparity between the skills possessed by fresh graduates and the demands of the industry has become a pressing concern. The need to bridge this skill gap between academia and the industry has gained significant attention. With a particular focus on the state of Karnataka, this study focus into the realm of employability skills, exploring the challenges faced by students and graduates in acquiring the necessary skills sought by employers (Rubvita Chadha et al, 2014). By investigating the current scenario and identifying potential solutions, this research aims to shed light on the ways in which academia and the industry can collaborate effectively to enhance the employability prospects of students, fostering a symbiotic relationship that benefits both parties.

Bridging the skill gap between industry and academia has become a pressing concern for governments, educational institutions, and businesses alike (Jason C. Dean, 2016). The ability to effectively match the skill sets of graduates with the requirements of the job market plays a vital role in promoting employability and economic growth. This study aims to examine the issue of employability skills in the context of Karnataka state, investigating the challenges faced by both industries and academia in addressing this gap.

Karnataka, a prominent state in India known for its technological advancements and thriving industries, has witnessed rapid growth in various sectors. Despite its remarkable progress, the state continues to grapple with the issue of employability skills among its workforce. The mismatch between the skills possessed by graduates and the skills demanded by employers poses a significant hurdle in achieving a sustainable and competent workforce (Andreas Blom & Hiroshi Saeki, 2012).

The rapid advancement of technology and the ever-evolving job market have created a significant gap between the skills possessed by graduates and the requirements of industries (Thierry Chevaillier, 2002). This gap, commonly known as the "skill gap," poses a substantial challenge for both academia and industry. In an attempt to address this issue, the present study focuses on bridging the skill gap between industry and academia, with a special emphasis on employability skills in Karnataka state.

The study will investigate the key employability skills that are currently in demand in the industries prevalent in Karnataka. By identifying these skills, educational institutions can

align their curricula to better equip students with the necessary knowledge and abilities. Employers can gain insights into the skill requirements and take proactive measures to bridge the gap between industry expectations and the skills possessed by graduates (Poornima Jain, 2013).

The research will explore the challenges faced by academic institutions in integrating employability skills into their educational programs effectively (Sue Cranmer, 2006). Factors such as outdated curricula, lack of industry collaboration, and limited exposure to practical experiences can hinder the development of these essential skills among students. Understanding these obstacles is crucial in formulating effective strategies to enhance the employability of graduates.

The study will also examine the perspective of industries operating in Karnataka regarding the readiness of graduates for the job market (Divya Shukla, 2012). By identifying the gaps and areas of improvement, industries can provide valuable feedback to educational institutions, fostering a collaborative approach to skill development. Moreover, the study will explore any existing initiatives or partnerships between academia and industry that have been successful in addressing the employability skills gap.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for policymakers, educational institutions, and employers in Karnataka and beyond. By understanding the specific employability skill gaps, stakeholders can devise targeted interventions, including curriculum reforms, training programs, and industry-academia collaborations, to address the issue effectively (Varwandkar Ajit, 2013).

The research outcomes will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on bridging the skill gap between industry and academia. By exploring the context of Karnataka state, the study adds valuable insights into the regional dynamics of employability skills, serving as a reference point for similar initiatives in other states or countries facing similar challenges.

The goal of this study is to facilitate a smoother transition for graduates from academia to industry, ensuring they possess the necessary skills and competencies to thrive in the job market (Michel, F., 2000). By bridging the skill gap, Karnataka can strengthen its workforce, attract investments, and foster sustainable economic growth.

"Bridging Skill Gap between Industry and Academia - A Study on Employability Skills with Special Reference to Karnataka State" aims to investigate the challenges and opportunities in aligning the skills of graduates with the needs of industries. (Lasantha, 2010) The findings of this research endeavor will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the employability skills gap and provide actionable recommendations for stakeholders to enhance the employability of graduates in Karnataka state.

1.1 EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

Employability skills are a crucial set of qualities and attributes that individuals possess and develop to enhance their chances of securing and excelling in employment opportunities. These skills go beyond technical expertise or academic qualifications, focusing on personal qualities, communication abilities, and a range of attributes that enable individuals to thrive in the workplace.

One of the essential employability skills is effective communication. This skill encompasses both verbal and written communication and involves the ability to articulate ideas clearly, listen actively, and convey information concisely. Good communication skills facilitate collaboration, understanding, and the exchange of ideas, which are vital in any work environment.

Another vital employability skill is teamwork and collaboration. The ability to work well with others, contribute ideas, and cooperate in a team setting is highly valued by employers (Poornima Jain, 2013). Teamwork often involves active participation, respect for diverse perspectives, and the willingness to compromise and find common ground to achieve shared goals.

Problem-solving and critical thinking and technical skills are also highly sought after in the job market. These skills enable individuals to analyze complex situations, identify challenges, and develop innovative solutions. Effective problem solvers can think creatively, evaluate multiple options, and make informed decisions, contributing to the success of projects and organizations.

Adaptability and flexibility are essential in today's rapidly changing work landscape. Employers value individuals who can adjust to new situations, embrace change, and quickly learn new skills. The ability to adapt allows individuals to navigate uncertainties, handle

unexpected challenges, and remain productive and resilient in evolving work environments (Nidhi Srivastava, 2014).

Employability skills also encompass qualities such as time management, organizational skills, and attention to detail. Employers value individuals who can prioritize tasks, meet deadlines, and manage their workload effectively. Strong organizational skills, including planning, setting goals, and staying focused, contribute to individual productivity and overall team success.

A positive attitude and a strong work ethic are highly regarded employability skills. Employers appreciate individuals who demonstrate enthusiasm, motivation, and a willingness to go the extra mile. A positive attitude fosters a productive work environment and enhances team morale, while a strong work ethic ensures dedication, reliability, and accountability.

Continuous learning and a growth mindset are crucial employability skills. In today's knowledge-driven economy, individuals need to adapt to new technologies, industry trends, and emerging opportunities. Employers value individuals who demonstrate a willingness to learn, seek out new knowledge, and continuously improve their skills and expertise.

Employability skills are a set of qualities and attributes that go beyond technical knowledge and academic qualifications. These skills encompass effective communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, time management, a positive attitude, and a commitment to continuous learning. Developing and showcasing these employability skills can significantly enhance an individual's chances of securing employment and succeeding in the modern job market.

1.2 BRIDGE THE SKILL GAP:

In order to bridge the skill gap between academia and industry, educational institutions have been implementing various measures to enhance the employability of students. These measures aim to equip students with practical skills and relevant knowledge that align with the needs and expectations of the job market. Here are some key strategies employed by educational institutions:

1. **Curriculum Revisions:** Educational institutions are continuously reviewing and updating their curricula to ensure they reflect the latest industry trends and demands.

This includes incorporating industry-relevant courses, practical training, and experiential learning opportunities. By aligning the curriculum with industry requirements, students gain hands-on experience and develop the skills necessary for their chosen careers.

2. **Industry Partnerships:** Collaboration between educational institutions and industries is crucial for narrowing the skill gap. Institutions establish partnerships with businesses, organizations, and industry experts to develop joint programs, internships, and research projects. These partnerships provide students with exposure to real-world scenarios, industry mentorship, and networking opportunities, enabling them to develop industry-specific skills.

3. **Internships and Co-op Programs**: Educational institutions encourage students to participate in internships and cooperative education programs. These initiatives allow students to gain practical experience by working in real-world settings. Through internships, students can apply their theoretical knowledge, develop professional skills, and build connections with potential employers. Co-op programs provide longer-term work experiences, enabling students to immerse themselves in industry practices and understand workplace dynamics.

4. **Skill-based Training and Certifications:** To address specific skill gaps, educational institutions offer skill-based training programs and certifications. These programs focus on developing practical skills such as coding, data analysis, project management, digital marketing, and communication. By obtaining these certifications, students enhance their employability and demonstrate their proficiency in key areas sought by employers.

5. **Industry-Experienced Faculty:** Educational institutions are increasingly hiring faculty members who have extensive industry experience. This ensures that students are taught by professionals who possess firsthand knowledge of industry practices, current trends, and challenges. Industry-experienced faculty members can provide valuable insights, mentorship, and industry connections to students, facilitating their transition into the workforce.

6. **Career Development Services:** Educational institutions provide comprehensive career development services to help students navigate the job market successfully. These services include resume writing workshops, interview preparation sessions, career counseling, and job placement assistance. By equipping students with essential job search skills and industry insights, institutions enhance their employability and increase the likelihood of securing suitable employment.

7. **Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programs:** Many educational institutions have established entrepreneurship and innovation programs to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among students. These programs encourage students to develop innovative ideas, start their own ventures, and understand the dynamics of business creation. By nurturing entrepreneurship, institutions empower students to become job creators rather than just job seekers.

Educational institutions are actively taking measures to bridge the skill gap between academia and industry. By revising curriculum, fostering industry partnerships, offering practical training opportunities, and providing career development services, these institutions are equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to enhance their employability in the ever-evolving job market. These efforts are crucial for preparing students for successful careers and contributing to the growth and competitiveness of industries.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1 CONCEPT AND DEFINITIONS

a) **Communication Skills**: Communication skills are essential for students to effectively express their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Good communication skills enable students to articulate themselves clearly and confidently, both in written and verbal forms. By mastering communication skills, students can effectively interact with peers, teachers, and future colleagues, fostering better understanding and collaboration. Advantages of strong communication skills include improved academic performance, enhanced interpersonal relationships, and increased employability prospects.

b) **Personal Presentation Skills**: Personal presentation skills refer to the ability to present oneself in a professional and polished manner. These skills encompass

elements such as body language, appearance, grooming, and etiquette. Developing personal presentation skills allows students to create positive first impressions, establish credibility, and effectively represent themselves in various situations, such as interviews, presentations, and networking events. Advantages of personal presentation skills include increased self-confidence, improved interpersonal relationships, and higher chances of career success.

c) **Customer Relationship Management Skills**: Customer relationship management (CRM) skills are essential for students pursuing careers in fields such as sales, marketing, and customer service. These skills involve understanding customer needs, building strong relationships, and providing exceptional customer experiences. By developing CRM skills, students can effectively manage customer interactions, address concerns, and foster loyalty. Advantages of CRM skills include increased customer satisfaction, improved business performance, and enhanced career prospects in customer-centric industries.

d) **Leadership Skills**: Leadership skills are valuable for students regardless of their future career paths. These skills involve the ability to inspire, motivate, and guide others towards a common goal. Students with leadership skills can take initiative, make informed decisions, and effectively collaborate with team members. Advantages of leadership skills include improved problem-solving abilities, increased influence and impact, and enhanced opportunities for advancement and leadership roles.

e) **Information Technology Skills:** In today's digital age, information technology (IT) skills are crucial for students. These skills encompass proficiency in computer applications, software, programming languages, and digital literacy. By acquiring IT skills, students can effectively navigate and utilize technology, access information, and adapt to the evolving digital landscape. Advantages of IT skills include improved academic performance, increased productivity, and expanded career opportunities in technology-driven industries.

f) **Time Management Skills:** Time management skills are essential for students to effectively balance their academic, personal, and extracurricular commitments. These skills involve prioritizing tasks, setting goals, and allocating time efficiently. Students with good time management skills can meet deadlines, reduce stress, and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Advantages of time management skills include improved academic performance, enhanced productivity, and reduced procrastination.

Developing communication skills, personal presentation skills, customer relationship management skills, leadership skills, information technology skills, and time management skills provides numerous advantages for students. These skills not only enhance their academic performance but also equip them with essential abilities that are highly valued in various professional settings. Mastering these skills can contribute to their personal growth, interpersonal relationships, and overall success in their chosen careers.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous research studies have been conducted in both developed and developing countries. A concise overview of the following research papers demonstrates their significant contributions to the field of Bridging the skill gap amongst industry and academia. The subsequent literary works are closely associated with this particular research subject:

Mamie Griffin and Pedro Coelhoso (2019) Business students' perspectives on employability skills post internship experience: Lessons from the UAE assessed the status of employability skills from the perspective of students within a United Arab Emirates (UAE) institution based on their completion of a half-semester-long work placement experience. The findings of the study were students attributed a degree of importance to all skills addressed in the study with the greatest importance being attached to communication, teamwork and time management. Students indicated that most skills were addressed in the classroom; however, there appears to be a lack of awareness in the areas of critical thinking, self-management, intercultural skills and taking initiative.

Tamgid A Chowdhury, et al (2019) Perceptions of students and employers regarding employability skills for entry-level positions in marketing and sales devised a 20-item, six-dimensional Employability Skills Index for entry-level jobs in marketing and sales based on the perceptions of students, and a second, 22-item, six-dimensional Employability Skills Index based on the perceptions of employers. Both indexes demonstrated sound reliability, and presented initial support for the validity of the scales. The study was based on 418 and 973 survey responses collected from Bangladeshi corporate managers and university students, respectively. The study revealed substantial differences in opinions between employers and students on employability skills required for entry-level marketing and sales positions. Managers prioritized skills such as planning, organizing ability, experience, professionalism, type of major courses taken, and positive attitude towards work. On the

other hand, students prioritized skills such as commitment to the organization, commitment to the job area, complex problem-solving skills, and internship in a relevant field, critical thinking ability, and basic knowledge of selling.

Ilhaamie Abdul Ghani Azmi et al (2018) Titled "The Employability Skills of Malaysian University Students" assessed the employability skills of students in Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia in order to measure their work readiness The study found 12 skills that the university students deem as to be very important whereby disciplined to top the list. Furthermore, there is a significant association between graduates' skills and genders such as organization skills, problem-solving, teamwork, and good time management. There is also a significant association between respondents' skills and institutions such as problem-solving skills.

J. Peach and M. Mansfield (2018) Personalizing Work Based Learning for a Mass and Diverse Market provides an explanation and evaluation of the work-based learning module at the University of Chester, located in the North West of England. The module is designed to meet the needs of a university-wide student body, servicing over 1600 students from all faculties and disciplines. The aim is to develop workplace experiential learning and transferable skills, which, the authors argue, offer long-term employability benefits due to the changing nature of employment. It highlights the logistical and pedagogical challenges of such an approach, including the complexity of required support. Evaluation of the module is collected annually from all stakeholders, highlighting the criticality of the symbiotic relationship between the university, students and employers.

Jenifer Nicholas (2018) Marketable selves: Making sense of employability as a liberal arts undergraduate explores the storied career-related perceptions of undergraduates in the College of Liberal Arts at a large, state-affiliated university. Thirty-two students participated in in-depth interviews to identify prevalent themes in employability narrative construction. Transcripts were coded and analyzed according to grounded theory methodology. Findings suggest that participants construct and manage employability narratives in an iterative process of exploring, packaging, and distinguishing themselves. Participants' semantic negotiation of "liberal arts" provides a sensitizing lens for consideration of contemporary student perspectives. By ascribing meaning and value to underlying influences on career

progress, exploratory student thinking offers insights for practitioners and theorists concerned for the future of liberal arts graduates.

Jibao Gu et al (2018) Can curriculum help career success? empirical research on the perceived employability of students examined the influencing mechanism of curriculum, including course workload and course challenge, on the PE of students. Results from a sample of 880 Chinese graduate students confirm that course workload and course challenge positively affect PE via motivational belief; high-level supervisor–student relationships increase the effect of course challenge, and high-level student–student relationships improve the effect of course workload. The results present valuable guidance to universities on how to improve the PE of students through curriculum to help them succeed in their careers.

Subramanian (2017) in his study on Higher Education and Employability Skills, explored the areas which are critical for employability of our students coming out of higher educational institutions. The paper considered what skill sets are lacking in our students and how this can be provided through soft skill training and Personality Development programs.

Dr. Vijaya (2013) throws light on teaching soft skills through web technologies and reviews how far it is effective for the trainees. The author compares practical intelligence and the technology for learning soft skills and points out which is more reliable. Finally, opportunities for students to develop employability skills should not be developed by faculty in isolation, believing that the students will be benefited. If students are aware of how and why their employability skills are being developed, and recognize the importance of the approach, then they will take ownership of these initiatives, offering far more chance of success.

Goswami, R. (2013) presented a conceptual paper emphasizing on the need of soft skills for the students entering the IT world. The study brings to light the importance of soft skills for professional and personal development. In today's world, more and more people are becoming aware of the indispensable nature of soft skills. The IT students need soft skills specifically as after they complete their courses, they have knowledge of hard skills but lack in soft skills. These are the "Life Skills" which shape up an individual's persona. Possessing soft skills with hard skills gives a competitive advantage to students when applying for jobs.

Masura, R. and Kamsuriah, A (2012) aims to measure the employability of the FIST (Faculty of Information Science and Technology) graduates, Measurement carried out is

based on the skills possessed by graduates during their studies at the faculty, skills are assessed based on their basic knowledge of programming system development, soft skills, and entrepreneur skills. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were used to analyses the data. The findings revealed that the relationships between employability and graduates' perception of their own skills. The study suggests identify whether the level of skills possessed by graduates during their studies are appropriate in helping them to perform in the current job market.

Pandey, N. (2012) makes an attempt to identify the important factors affecting employability of MBA students. The sampling technique used was random sampling technique. The data were collected and the study used was primary data. The findings revealed that the attempt to find out the level of awareness of life skills among professional students, which are deemed necessary by any employer from an employee. The study was concluded that the life skills.

Adriana, E. (2010) makes an attempt to conceptualize and develop the Comprehensive Employability Skill Framework and to test it in verifying the existence of any perception gap regarding the most important skills for a successful employability between the groups surveyed: MBA graduates. Tools used were Cronbach Alpha coefficient, Friedman test and t-test. The study concludes that, the necessity of better understanding the most recent skills required, with a beneficial effect on the quality of the employers.

Mason, Williams, and Cranmer (2009) found that structured work experiences an employer involvement in degree course design and deliver have clear positive effects on the ability of graduates to secure employment in graduates level job. There is no evidence that the emphasis given by university Department to the teaching, learning and assessment of employability skill has significant effect on either of the labor outcomes.

Azami, Z. (2008) discusses a perception and expectation of Malaysian industries towards graduate engineers is conducted. In order to create a smoother transition from education to practice, some argue that engineering education should put more emphasis on the engineering-based knowledge. Thus, this study investigates also the gap analysis which is defined as the difference between expectation and perception among majority of Malaysian industries towards existing engineering graduates. In overall, the author discussed the

discrepancy between what is expected of the work force and their performance as perceived by the employers according to thirteen competency attributes.

Hillmer, G. (2007) stated that scientific investigations have shown that career development and success in life are very much based on the outward appearance and the behavior of a person and only to a minor extend on the mere technical expertise. In today's industry and trade, there is an increasing demand for engineers who don't just have excellent competence in their field of specialization but also a good understanding and practical experience in the so- called social and soft skills. These subjects are usually not adequately addressed in engineering degree programs. The discussions with engineering students and also their course evaluations give a clear indication that the acceptance for these trainings is generally high.

Morley, L. (2007) identified that educational experience and process can contribute the development of employability skill and socio-economic privilege can be transferred on the production and codification of qualifications and competencies.

4. RESEARCH GAP

Numerous research endeavors have focused into the disparity between the skills needed by industries and those provided by educational institutions. Despite these efforts, a void in research still persisted concerning the unique employability skills scenario within the state of Karnataka. The objective of this study was to fill this gap by scrutinizing the employability skills requisite for industries in Karnataka and pinpointing the inadequacies in skills furnished by academic establishments.

1. A Focus on Karnataka State: Prevailing research on the mismatch between industry and academia often lacked a precise regional focus. Although employability skills could differ across various states, there was a dearth of investigations specifically targeting the skill gap in Karnataka State. Through narrowing its scope to Karnataka, this study aimed to shed light on the distinct challenges faced by the state in bridging this skills gap.
2. Thorough Examination of Employability Skills: While some studies had explored the broad skills demanded by industries, a thorough examination of employability skills tailored to Karnataka State was necessary. This research aimed to pinpoint and prioritize the particular skills in demand within the state's industries. Through an in-

depth analysis of these skills, the study aimed to contribute to bridging the divide between academic offerings and industrial requirements.

3. Assessment of Existing Academic Programs: Another gap in research pertained to the lack of assessment of ongoing academic programs designed to enhance employability skills. By assessing the effectiveness of current programs in Karnataka, this study strived to uncover the strengths and weaknesses of these initiatives and propose enhancements. This evaluation aimed to align academic curricula more effectively with the needs of industries.
4. Incorporating Stakeholder Perspectives: While some studies had explored the skills gap either from an industry or academic viewpoint, a gap existed regarding the incorporation of perspectives from both sides. This study aimed to bridge this divide by considering the perspectives of industry representatives, academic faculty, and students. By incorporating these diverse viewpoints, the research aimed to offer a holistic understanding of the skills gap and propose collaborative solutions.

This research sought to contribute to existing literature by addressing the research gap related to closing the skills mismatch between industry and academia within Karnataka State. By concentrating on this specific context, conducting a thorough analysis of employability skills, evaluating existing academic programs, and including input from various stakeholders, the research aspired to provide insights useful for policymakers, educators, and industry professionals. The ultimate goal was to enhance the employability skills landscape in the state.

5. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In the swiftly changing job market of recent times, a significant disparity has emerged between the skills that graduates possess and the skills that employers are seeking. This incongruity has given rise to growing concerns about the ability of individuals moving from educational settings to professional workplaces to find suitable employment. The central issue at hand revolves around the urgent requirement to narrow this skills gap and improve the job-ready capabilities of graduates.

The study undertaken at that time aimed to explore the factors contributing to the divergence between what industries expect and what academic institutions offer in terms of employability skills. The objective was to pinpoint the essential skill sets that hold the

greatest value for employers and to identify the specific areas where educational establishments might not be adequately equipping students for the demands of the workforce.

One dimension of the challenge stemmed from the rapid progress of technology and the resulting shifts in the job landscape. Traditional academic programs often struggled to quickly integrate the latest industry trends and prerequisites. Consequently, graduates frequently found themselves lacking vital proficiencies like critical thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, teamwork, and adaptability—qualities highly prized by employers.

An additional hurdle arose from the mismatch between theoretical knowledge acquired through academic coursework and the hands-on skills required by industries. While academic curricula primarily centered on theoretical concepts, there was a growing demand for graduates who possessed real-world, practical experience. This discrepancy often resulted in graduates lacking practical skills, making their transition into professional roles more arduous.

Insufficient collaboration and communication between academia and industry exacerbated the situation. The disconnect between these two entities hindered the creation of curricula that aligned with industry needs. Establishing stronger partnerships and fostering dialogue between academia and industry were essential to ensure that educational institutions could impart graduates with the aptitudes and knowledge necessary to fulfill industry expectations.

Addressing this issue necessitated a comprehensive study that examined the viewpoints of both employers and academic institutions. By identifying the specific gaps and gaining insight into the factors contributing to them, effective strategies could be developed to bridge the skills gap between academia and industry. This research would not only benefit job-seeking graduates but also aid educational institutions in aligning their offerings with industry requisites, ultimately bolstering the overall employability of graduates and cultivating a more robust workforce.

6. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the key employability skills possessed by post-graduate students that make them suitable for employment?
2. What are the specific measures implemented by educational institutions to enhance the employability of post-graduate students?

3. What are the primary skills and competencies desired by prospective employers when hiring post-graduate students?
4. How can the skill gap between industry requirements and the skills provided by academia be accurately analyzed and measured?
5. What are the major areas of skill disparity between industry expectations and the skills offered by post-graduate students from academia?
6. What effective strategies and initiatives can be recommended to bridge the skill gap between industry requirements and the skills provided by academia?

7. NEED FOR THE STUDY

The collaboration between industry and academia was deemed essential for achieving sustainable economic growth and advancing the overall development of a region. However, a notable disparity often existed between the proficiencies possessed by recent graduates and the industry's prerequisites. This incongruity had adverse effects on graduates' employability and impeded workforce expansion. Consequently, a comprehensive investigation into employability technical skills, particularly focused on Karnataka State, was deemed imperative to identify and rectify the gap in skills between industry and academia.

Detection of Skill Deficits: The study's objective was to pinpoint the principal skill deficiencies that obstructed the employability of Karnataka State's graduates. By conducting surveys, interviews, and gathering input from various stakeholders—comprising businesses, educational institutions, and students—the research highlighted the precise domains in which graduates exhibited inadequate skills.

Comprehending Industry Anticipations: Effectively bridging the skills gap necessitated a profound understanding of the evolving requirements and expectations of Karnataka's industries. The study delved into the prevailing industry patterns, technological advancements, and emerging job responsibilities to gain insights into the proficiencies and capabilities that potential employers sought in candidates.

Evaluation of Academic Curriculum: The research scrutinized the prevailing academic curriculum within Karnataka State and assessed its alignment with industry prerequisites. By analyzing course outlines, syllabi, teaching methodologies, and industry-academia partnerships, the investigation pinpointed areas within the curriculum that could be enhanced to amplify graduates' employability.

Suggesting Strategies for Skill Enhancement: Based on the revelations from the analysis of the skills gap, the study put forth effective strategies for bridging the identified disparities. These recommendations encompassed potential revisions to the curriculum, the integration of industry-specific training initiatives, internships, apprenticeships, and the cultivation of soft skills. The goal was to equip graduates with the necessary abilities and aptitudes to fulfill industry demands.

Elevating Employability and Economic Progress: Through the reduction of the skills gap between industry and academia, the study aspired to heighten the employability of Karnataka State's graduates. When graduates possessed skills and knowledge aligning with industry standards, it translated to augmented job placement rates, decreased unemployment, and overall economic advancement. The research findings were poised to furnish actionable insights to policymakers, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders, thus enabling a collaborative effort to devise strategies that fostered a highly adept workforce.

8. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research study considered the following objectives:

1. To understand the employability skills of post-graduate students to be suitably employed.
2. To investigate the measures taken by educational institutions.
3. To identify the various technical skills expected by the prospective employers
4. To analyse the skill gap between Industry and Academia
5. To suggest measures to bridge the skill gap between Industry and Academia

9. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The research study considered the hypotheses listed below:

H_1: There is a significant gap between the required and existing Communication skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.

H_2: There is a significant gap between the required and existing Customer Relationship Management Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.

H_3: There is a significant gap between the required and existing Leadership Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.

H_4: There is a significant gap between the required and existing Information Technology Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.

H_5: There is a significant gap between the required and existing Time Management Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.

H_6: There is a significant gap between the required and existing Personal Presentation Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.

H_7: There is a significant impact of skills test during an interview in attaining better Placements by students.

H_8: There is a significant impact of institutions on curriculum provided to enhance employability skills.

H_9: There is a significant impact of Institutions on Training Conducted by The Institution for Student's Employability.

10. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The concern regarding the skills gap between academia and industry had escalated in the rapidly evolving job market of that time. As industries underwent transformations and technology advanced, it was imperative to tackle the mismatch between graduates' skills and employers' demands. The objective of the research was to investigate the employability skills sought after by businesses in the state of Karnataka. The study aimed to uncover the gaps that hindered the successful transition from educational institutions to the professional realm. By shedding light on this issue, the research held significant importance in fostering a more efficient and productive labor market within the region.

1. **Enhancing Workforce Readiness:** The research's significance resided in its potential to improve graduates' employability by identifying and addressing specific skills disparities prevalent in Karnataka's job market at the time. By identifying the deficiencies in the skill set of recent graduates and analyzing the skills demanded by industries, higher education institutions could align their curricula with employers' needs. This alignment ensured that graduates acquired pertinent, current skills, ultimately enhancing their readiness for the workforce.
2. **Empowering Educational Institutions:** Grasping the divide between academia and industry allowed educational establishments to adapt their teaching approaches, curriculum structures, and skills development initiatives. By incorporating industry-relevant projects, internships, and practical experiences, these institutions could foster a more comprehensive learning environment. This approach would nurture not only

technical skills but also crucial soft skills such as communication, problem-solving, and teamwork.

3. **Boosting Economic Competitiveness:** A well-prepared workforce had a direct impact on the competitiveness of Karnataka's economy. With graduates possessing the necessary skills, industries could function at peak efficiency, driving higher productivity and innovation. With a capable workforce, the state became more attractive to investments and businesses, thereby stimulating economic growth and progress.
4. **Mitigating Unemployment Rates:** Unemployment often stemmed from a mismatch between job seekers' skills and the available positions. The study's findings could inform policymakers to craft targeted interventions aimed at reducing unemployment rates within Karnataka. By arming job seekers with the requisite skills, they became more attractive to employers, leading to better job matches and lower frictional unemployment.
5. **Cultivating Industry-Academia Collaboration:** The insights from the study could cultivate stronger collaborations between industries and educational institutions. By pinpointing specific skill requirements of diverse sectors, academia could proactively collaborate with companies to design tailored training programs, internships, and skill-building initiatives. Such partnerships ensured students gained exposure to real-world challenges and opportunities, rendering them more adaptable to industry expectations.
6. **Promoting Lifelong Learning:** The study's identification of relevant employability skills fostered a culture of continuous learning among graduates and employees. Recognizing the necessity for ongoing skill development, individuals were more inclined to partake in upskilling and reskilling endeavors, rendering them more competitive and employable in the long-term.

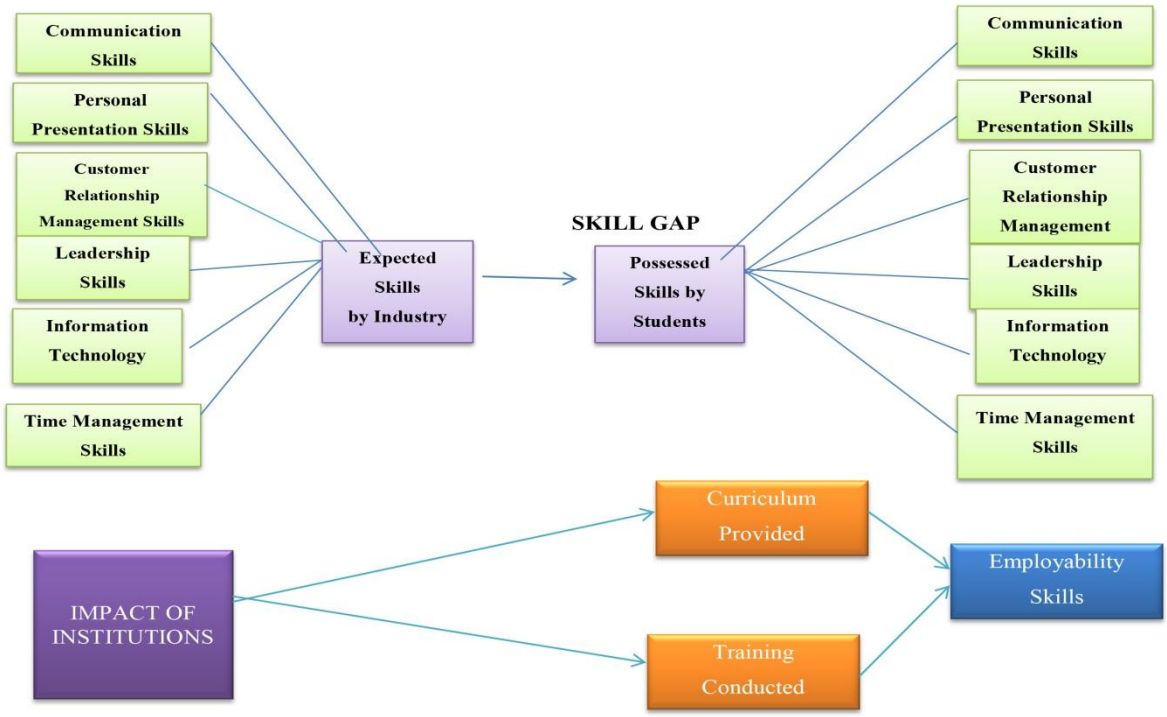
11. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The results of the study contributed to the existing body of knowledge by offering insights into the disparity between industry and academia in terms of skills, and by suggesting practical strategies to improve employability skills. These research findings proved valuable for educators, policymakers, and industry experts who aimed to enhance cooperation and tackle the challenges graduates face in finding employment.

The research played a role in enhancing educational programs and teaching methods. By pinpointing gaps in skills and knowledge, institutions were able to adjust and customize their curricula to match job market requirements. This ensured that graduates possessed pertinent and current skills, rendering them more appealing to potential employers. As a result, educational institutions could bolster their reputation and attract more students seeking hands-on, industry-applicable education.

The study also served employers by furnishing them with insightful information on the specific skills to prioritize when recruiting new staff. By comprehending the employability skills lacking in the pool of job seekers, employers could design targeted training initiatives or collaborate with educational institutions to bridge the gap. This partnership between academia and industry fostered a smoother transition from education to employment, leading to reduced recruitment expenses and heightened organizational productivity. Looking at the bigger picture, narrowing the skill gap bore significant implications for the overall economy. A workforce rich in skills bolstered a nation's global competitiveness and spurred economic advancement. By addressing the mismatch in employability skills, the study contributed to lowering unemployment rates, increasing efficiency in the labor market, and fostering sustainable economic growth.

12. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SKILL GAP BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA



13. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized both primary and secondary sources to maximize the data concerning the variables under investigation. The primary data was acquired through surveys and interviews conducted for the first time. The researcher initially interviewed authorities from educational institutions in five districts of Karnataka. Subsequently, permission was sought from recruiters to administer a structured questionnaire to their human resource managers and assistants. The questionnaire was distributed among students and educational institutions, and interviews were conducted with select respondents who lacked sufficient time to complete it. Respondents were purposefully chosen based on their willingness and availability. To ensure a high response rate of 98%, multiple reminders were sent to the educational institutions to gather responses. The study focused on educational institutions in the top five districts of Karnataka: Bengaluru, Dakshina Kannada, Mysore, Dharwad, and Davangere. The participants included MBA and M. Com students who had graduated in the year 2019-2020, as well as educational institutions and recruiters from the aforementioned districts. The collected data was analyzed using Excel, SPSS, and AMOS software.

Secondary data was sourced from various published materials, including journal articles, books, videos, case studies, magazines, newspapers, and online archives such as Google Scholar and the INFLIBNET websites.

13.1. SAMPLE SIZE: Sample size was calculated as per Cochran Formula (Cochran, 1977). In order to assess the sample size for Students and Educational Institutions, researcher used Cochran Formula to conduct the analysis on the basis of which we arrived at following calculations:

- **Population considered for calculation of Sample Size was as follows:** Students =48026 (MBA and M. Com students pursuing and graduated in the year 2019-2020)

Table 13.1.1 Population of MBA and M. Com students

District	MBA colleges	M. Com College	Total
Bengaluru(Urban &Rural)	37544	5755	43299
Dakshina Kannada	758	477	1235
Mysore	1542	714	2256

Dharwad	548	316	864
Davangere	112	148	372
Population of MBA and M. Com students			**48026**

Source: University and VTU websites

Educational Institutions = 578 (MBA and M. Com Colleges in 5 districts of Karnataka) which is bifurcated as follows:

13.1.2 Population Size for Educational Institutions

District	MBA colleges	M. Com College	Total
Bengaluru	313	147	460
Dakshina Kannada	15	18	33
Mysore	26	27	53
Dharwad	10	12	22
Davangere	3	7	10
Population Size for Educational Institutions			578

Table 13.1.3 Sample Size Calculation

SAMPLE SIZE CALCULATION	**Educational Institutions**	**Students**
Confidence Level	95%	95%
P	0.5	0.5
Error	0.05	0.04
Population Size	578	48026
Alpha divided by 2	0.025	0.025
Z Score	1.96	1.96
Sample Size	230.77	592.81

The equation employed for the aforementioned computation is as follows:

Sample Size= [z2 * p(1-p)] / e2 / 1 + [z2 * p(1-p)] / e2 * N]

where, N is the population size
z is the z-score
e is the margin of error
p is the standard of deviation

According to the previously stated sample size calculation, the research had concluded that it was necessary to incorporate 231 Educational Institutions and 600 students into the sample. To mitigate potential statistical inaccuracies, the research opted to utilize a sample size of 239

Educational Institutions and 612 students. The study employed the multi-stage sampling technique to select respondents, aligning with the research goals. Multi-stage sampling is a research sampling approach that involves selecting participants based on particular attributes or qualities relevant to the research objectives.

13.1.3 Description of the statistical techniques employed in the analysis of the data

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	**DEPENDENT VARIABLES**	**TOOLS USED**
Required Technical Skills	Existing Technical Skills	Paired T-Test
Required Communication Skills	Existing Communication Skills	Paired T-Test
Required CRM Skills	Existing CRM Skills	Paired T-Test
Required Leadership Skills	Existing Leadership Skills	Paired T-Test
Required Information Technology Skills	Existing Information Technology Skills	Paired T-Test
Required Time Management Skills	Existing Time Management Skills	Paired T-Test
Required Presentation Skills	Existing Presentation Skills	Paired T-Test
Required Employability Skills	Existing Leadership Skills	Paired T-Test
Acquired Skills	Current Salary	Multiple Regression
Skills Test	Placements	SEM using AMOS
Institutions	Curriculum provided to enhance employability skills.	One-Way ANOVA
Institutions	Training Conducted for employability	One-Way ANOVA
Job Selection Criteria		Friedman-Test

The study employed Descriptive analysis to examine the socio-economic characteristics of the participants, including their Gender, Age, Qualification, and geographic location. Moreover, Descriptive analysis was also used to assess the skill tests administered during the interview, the curriculum offered by educational institutions to enhance employability skills, and the employability skills required by postgraduate students for their future careers. If the data followed a normal distribution, parametric tests such as ANOVA and t-tests were deemed appropriate. These tests make assumptions that the data is normally distributed.

14. ANALYSIS:

14.1 Demographic Profile:

The demographic profile of recruiters reveals that the majority of them, 37 percent, belong to the age group of 35-45 years, with 32 percent in the 25-35 years category, 17 percent below 25 years, and 15 percent above 45 years. In terms of the nature of their organizations, 73 percent work in private Ltd companies, 13 percent in public Ltd, 8 percent in entrepreneurial ventures, and 3.3 percent in partnership firms. Concerning the number of full-time employees, 35 percent of organizations employ 500 or more, 17 percent employ between 51-100 and 200 and above, 12 percent employ 100 and above, and 8.3 percent employ less than 50. When it comes to pay for fresh incumbents, 48.3 percent of recruiters pay 1,20,000 – 2,40,000 per annum, 27 percent pay 2,40,000 – 3,60,000, 12 percent pay less than 1,20,000, and 7 percent pay above 3,60,000 per annum.

In contrast, the demographic profile of students from the data of 612 interviewees indicates a higher representation of females at 75.3 percent compared to males at 24.7 percent. Most students, 64.7 percent, fall into the 20-22 years age group, followed by 30.1 percent in the 22-24 years category, with only 3.8 percent above 24 years old. Regarding qualifications, 62.7 percent are in their final year of post-graduation, 33.5 percent have completed their first year of post-graduation, 2.3 percent have just completed their post-graduation, and 1.5 percent hold M.Phil./Ph.D. degrees. Furthermore, 84.5 percent of students are from urban areas, while 15.5 percent are from rural areas. In summary, the student group interviewed primarily consists of females aged 20-24, residing in urban areas, and most are nearing the completion of their post-graduate studies.

14.2 PERCEIVED SKILLS BY RECRUITER RANKING ANALYSIS THROUGH FRIEDMAN TEST

Table 14.1 Perceived Skills by Recruiter – Friedman test

Items Ranked as per Perceived Skills	Nos.	Mean	Mean Rank	Preference
Communication	60	4.88	4.88	1
Customer Relationship Management	60	2.41	2.41	5
Leadership	60	3.31	3.31	4
Information Technology	60	3.85	3.85	3
Time Management	60	1.79	1.79	6
Personal Presentation	60	4.77	4.77	2
			N	60
			Chi-Square	152.244
			df	5
			Sig.	.000

As per Friedman test, Table 14.1 We could derive to the result that though all kind of Perceived Skills, Communication skills and personal Presentation skills is given more preference by the recruiters followed by information technology skills and Leadership skills with the mean rank of 3.85 and 3.31 respectively. The least preference for Perceived skills was CRM and Time Management skills with the mean rank of 2.41 and 1.79 respectively.

14.3 Relationship between Communication, customer relationship management, Leadership Information Technology, Time Management, and Presentation skills and Employability: The first phase tested the model depicting the variables of the Communication, customer relationship management, Leadership Information Technology, Time Management, and Presentation skills and Employability. The structural model with standardized path coefficients is shown in figure 1 to test the hypothesis h1: There is a significant impact of perceived skills on employability of students.

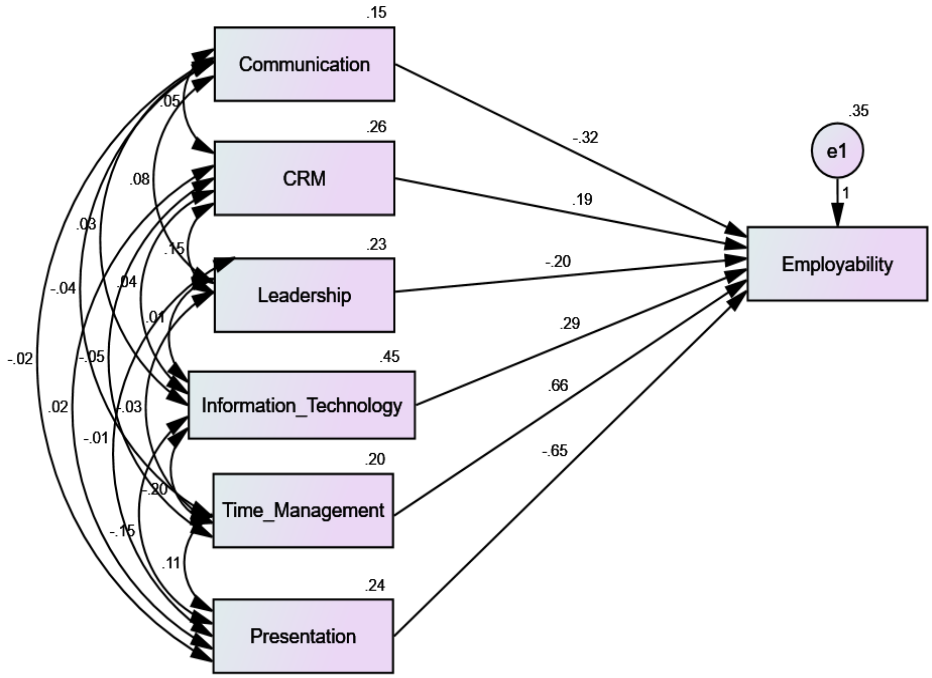


Figure 1: Model Linking Impact of Perceived Skills by Recruiter on Employability.

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

Dependent Variable		Independent Variable	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Employability	<	Communication	.315	.222	1.421	.035
Employability	<	CRM	.194	.203	.958	.038
Employability	<	Leadership	.198	.224	.883	.017
Employability	<	Information Technology	.291	.159	1.835	.016
Employability	<	Time Management	.658	.248	2.658	.008
Employability	<	Presentation	.650	.189	3.430	.000

Table 14.3.1

The path coefficients of the structural model which revealed that all six Skills viz, Communication, customer relationship management, Leadership Information Technology, Time Management, and Presentation skills has a positive and significant impact on Employability (E) ($\beta = .145$, $p<.05$). Therefore, we can conclude that alternate hypothesis is accepted i.e. There is a significant impact of perceived skills by recruiters on employability of students.

14.4 HYPOTHESIS INFERENCE:

Sl No.	Objectives	Hypothesis	Statistical Test Applied	P value	Significance Level	Result	Inference With supporting studies
1	To analyse the skill gap between Industry and Academia.	There is a significant gap between the required and existing Communication skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.	Paired T-Test	0.013	0.05	Accepted	In a study by Anderson and Davis (2018), the researchers investigated the impact of digital communication on traditional interpersonal skills. They found that the extensive use of digital communication platforms can lead to a deficit in face-to-face communication abilities, creating a gap between the skills required for different modes of interaction.
2	To analyse the skill gap between Industry and Academia.	There is a significant gap between the required and existing Customer Relationship Management Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.	Paired T-Test	0.028	0.05	Accepted	Chen, I. J., & Popovich, K. (2003) discuss the integral role of people in CRM. They suggest that any misalignment in the skills of CRM professionals can result in ineffective CRM implementation.

3	To analyse the skill gap between Industry and Academia.	There is a significant gap between the required and existing Leadership Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.	Paired T-Test	0.045	0.05	Accepted	A survey conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) revealed that leaders often underestimate the importance of skills such as emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). This underscores a noticeable discrepancy between the skills considered crucial for leadership in the current era and those typically demonstrated by leaders.
4	To analyse the skill gap between Industry and Academia.	There is a significant gap between the required and existing Information Technology Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.	Paired T-Test	0.013	0.05	Accepted	The nature of required IT skills is constantly evolving (Sullivan, 2020). With emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and cloud computing, the skills that were highly sought after a few years ago may no longer be as relevant.

5	To analyse the skill gap between Industry and Academia.	There is a significant gap between the required and existing Time Management Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.	Paired T-Test	0.002	0.05	Accepted	Claessens et al. (2007) observed that there is a significant gap between the time management skills required to succeed in various roles and the skills that individuals possess. This gap is attributed to factors such as increased workload, technological distractions, and inadequate training
6	To analyse the skill gap between Industry and Academia.	There is a significant gap between the required and existing Personal Presentation Skills as perceived by recruiters of the industry.	Paired T-Test	0.032	0.05	Accepted	Brown and Davis (2019) indicates that job candidates frequently underestimate the importance of personal presentation skills, leading to a gap between the skills required by employers and those demonstrated by candidates.
7	To identify the various technical skills expected by the prospective employers.	There is a significant impact of skills test during an interview in attaining better Placements by students.	Multiple Regression	0.000	0.05	Accepted	-

8	To investigate the measures taken by educational institutions.	There is a significant impact of institutions on curriculum provided to enhance employability skills.	One-Way ANOVA	0.503	0.05	Rejected	Sullivan and Johnson (2016) conducted a comparative analysis of curriculum offerings in different higher education institutions. Their research revealed that institutional factors, such as the mission and values of the institution, often influence the design and content of academic programs.
9	To investigate the measures taken by educational institutions.	There is a significant impact of Institutions on Training Conducted by The Institution for Student's Employability.	One-Way ANOVA	0.000	0.05	Accepted	Institutional influences extend to the organizational level, affecting the culture and values of a specific organization (Scott, 2013). The culture of an institution can impact the types of training programs offered, their focus, and their alignment with the broader institutional norms and values.

From the above table, all the hypotheses are accepted except H_8.

1. Hypothesis (H_1): There is a Gap between Required Communication Skills and Existing Communication Skills.
    - Standardized β Coefficient: 0.321
    - Significance: 0.013
    - Inference: This hypothesis is accepted, indicating that there is a significant Gap between required communication skills and existing communication skills.
2. Hypothesis (H_2): There is a Gap between Required Customer Relationship Management Skills and Existing Customer Relationship Management Skills.
    - Standardized β Coefficient: 0.864
    - Significance: 0.028
    - Inference: This hypothesis is accepted, suggesting a substantial Gap between required customer Relationship management skills and existing skills in this area.
3. Hypothesis (H_3): There is a Gap between Required Leadership Skills and Existing Leadership Skills.
    - Standardized β Coefficient: 0.460
    - Significance: 0.045
    - Inference: This hypothesis is accepted, implying that there is a notable Gap between required leadership skills and existing leadership skills.
4. Hypothesis (H_4): There is a Gap between Required Information Technology Skills and Existing Information Technology Skills.
    - Standardized β Coefficient: 0.535
    - Significance: 0.013
    - Inference: This hypothesis is accepted, indicating a meaningful Gap between required information technology skills and existing skills in the IT domain.
5. Hypothesis (H_5): There is a Gap between Required Time Management Skills and Existing Time Management Skills.
    - Standardized β Coefficient: 0.743
    - Significance: 0.002
    - Inference: This hypothesis is accepted, pointing to a significant Gap between required time management skills and existing time management skills.

6. Hypothesis (H_6): There is a Gap between Required Personal Presentation Skills and Existing Personal Presentation Skills.
    - Standardized β Coefficient: 0.543
    - Significance: 0.032
    - Inference: This hypothesis is accepted, indicating a significant Gap between required personal presentation skills and existing skills in personal presentation.
7. Hypothesis (H_7): Skills Test results have an impact on Placements.
    - Standardized β Coefficient: 0.646
    - Significance: 0.000
    - Inference: This hypothesis is accepted, highlighting that skills test results significantly influence placements.
8. Hypothesis (H_8): Institutions have an effect on Curriculum.
    - Standardized β Coefficient: 0.443
    - Significance: 0.503
    - Inference: This hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that there is no significant Gap between institutions and the curriculum.
9. Hypothesis (H_9): Institutions influence Training.
    - Standardized β Coefficient: 1.642
    - Significance: 0.000
    - Inference: This hypothesis is accepted, demonstrating that institutions significantly impact training programs.

15. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

1. The study's findings were specific to the particular industry and academic institutions investigated in five districts of Karnataka, limiting the generalizability of the results to other industries or educational institutions.
2. Assessing employability skills is often subjective and context-dependent. Different industries and employers may have varying expectations and definitions of these skills, leading to potential discrepancies in skill assessments.
3. The study did not account for external factors that can influence the skill gap, such as macroeconomic conditions.

16. LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction In the first chapter, an outline of the research study titled "Bridging the Skill Gap between Industry and Academia - A Study on Employability Skills with a Specific Focus on Karnataka State" was presented. It commenced with an introduction to the significance of employability skills in the contemporary job market and the challenges faced by both industry and academia in tackling the skills gap. The chapter also outlined the research problem, objectives, and research queries. Additionally, it delved into the scope and importance of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review, the subsequent chapter centered on the review of existing literature and research endeavors that revolved around addressing the gap in skills between industry and academia. The exploration involved various theories, models, and frameworks pertinent to the cultivation of employability skills. The chapter scrutinized the elements contributing to the skill gap, the measures taken by diverse stakeholders to mitigate it, and the consequences of such interventions. Through the literature review, a theoretical foundation was laid for the study, revealing the research gaps targeted by this investigation.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology, In this chapter, a comprehensive account of the research methodology adopted for the study was provided. It expounded on the research design, methods of data collection, and sampling techniques employed. Furthermore, the chapter elucidated the creation and validation of the research tool utilized for data collection. The techniques used to analyze the data, which could encompass statistical approaches or qualitative analysis, were explicated within this section. The chapter culminated with an exploration of ethical considerations and the study's limitations.

Chapter 4: Conceptual Framework: The fourth chapter entailed an examination of conceptual frameworks and models devised to tackle the challenge of employability skills. It involved a thorough delineation of each skill, along with its associated benefits and potential for enhancing employability, aimed at bridging the skill gap between academia and industry.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Interpretation, Chapter 5 was dedicated to presenting the analysis and outcomes drawn from the amassed data. The data, garnered from surveys, interviews, and other pertinent sources, underwent scrutiny using appropriate statistical methods. The chapter highlighted key themes, trends, and patterns discerned within the data. These findings were then juxtaposed against the research objectives and questions. Any

notable correlations, disparities, or relationships unveiled during the analysis were set forth and explicated.

Chapter 6: Summary of Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion: The sixth and final chapter was focused on discussing and interpreting the findings within the context of the extant literature and theoretical framework. The implications of the research results in terms of narrowing the skill gap between industry and academia in Karnataka State were explored. The chapter further investigated the practical ramifications for policy makers, educational institutions, employers, and other stakeholders. Insights and strategies to amplify employability skills were proposed based on the study's revelations.

17.MAJOR FINDINGS

- Students need to improve their ability to communicate effectively in writing as the mean score for required written communication skills is significantly higher than the mean score for existing written communication skills.
- Students need to enhance their ability to communicate effectively through speech, as the mean score for required oral communication skills is higher than the mean score for existing oral communication skills.
- Students need to improve their ability to create and deliver effective presentations as the mean score for required presentation skills is higher than the mean score for existing presentation skills.
- Students need to improve their ability to communicate effectively through digital platforms as the mean score for required communication through technology use is higher than the mean score for existing communication through technology use.
- Students need to improve their ability to apply their knowledge in practical settings as the mean score for required ability to apply knowledge is higher than the mean score for existing ability to apply knowledge.

18. SUGGESTIONS

- Collaboration between industry and academia should be increased to identify the skills required in the job market.
- Academia should incorporate industry-relevant skills in their curriculum.

- Industry experts should be invited to give lectures and workshops in academic institutions to provide real-world insight.
- Internship programs should be designed to provide hands-on experience to students.
- Industry should provide on-the-job training to newly graduated students.
- Academic institutions should focus on practical training and include case studies in their curriculum.
- Industry professionals should be given the opportunity to review and provide feedback on academic curricula.
- Industry and academic institutions should work together to develop joint research projects.
- The use of modern technology in the classroom should be encouraged to keep pace with industry trends.
- Industry should provide opportunities for students to attend conferences and seminars.
- Academic institutions should be open to feedback from industry and continuously improve their curriculum.

19.CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study reveals a significant disparity between the skills taught in academia and those demanded by the industry. To bridge this gap, academic institutions should actively seek feedback from industry professionals and involve them in shaping the curriculum.

This will better equip students for their future careers. The findings underscore the crucial role of improving various skills, including communication, presentation, organization, interpersonal, and digital capabilities. While some respondents may not prioritize collaboration between academia and industry, the study highlights its potential benefits in closing the skill gap. Additionally, the research underscores the importance of increasing the frequency of internship programs. These internships provide students with invaluable work experience, helping them become more job-ready.

20. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The skill gap between industry and academia has been a persistent challenge, with many employers reporting difficulties in finding job-ready graduates. Despite the efforts made by academic institutions to impart theoretical knowledge, the practical

application of these skills in the industry remains a challenge. Thus, there is a need for further research on bridging the skill gap between industry and academia, specifically with reference to employability skills.

One area of research could be the identification of the specific employability skills that are lacking in graduates and how they can be developed. This could involve conducting a needs analysis with industry professionals to determine the skills that are in high demand and not adequately addressed in the current academic curriculum. This could be followed by the development of training programs that focus on imparting these skills to students, with a view to enhancing their employability.

A further area of research could be to examine the impact of digital technologies on the skill gap. With the increasing digitization of the workplace, there is a growing demand for digital skills among graduates. This research could explore the extent to which digital skills are included in the academic curriculum and identify ways to integrate them more effectively. It could also investigate the potential of online learning platforms in addressing the skill gap, particularly in remote areas.

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